

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 4521CHICAGO TRIBUNE
21 May 1987

Senate confirms move of Webster to CIA job

By Glen Elsasser
and George de Lama
Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON—FBI Director William Webster has been confirmed by the Senate as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, but an independent counsel's investigation of Atty. Gen. Edwin Meese apparently has delayed the selection of Webster's replacement as FBI chief.

Before Tuesday's 94-1 confirmation vote, Webster, 63, a former federal judge, won bipartisan praise for his nine-year tenure as FBI director. Senators expressed confidence that he would help restore relations with Congress that were damaged by the CIA's role in the Iran-contra affair.

The FBI post will remain vacant until Meese and the White House agree on who will succeed Webster after nine years as head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Webster was nominated March 3 to replace the ailing William Casey, who died May 6, but Meese's leading candidates so far have withdrawn their names from consideration.

Early this month, senior White House officials said President Reagan's top aides had planned to meet with Meese to narrow the list of candidates. However, the meeting has been postponed indefinitely, according to Reagan aides, because of the investigation of Meese's ties to the controversial Wedtech Corp., a defense contractor.

Terry Eastland, director of public information at the Justice Department, said, "Ed Meese is handling the nomination" of a new FBI director. But when asked how many names were under consideration and how soon the vacancy would be filled, Eastland replied, "I just don't know."

Reagan aides concede there is growing concern over whether Meese should play a critical role in the nomination while under investigation by Independent Counsel James McKay. Under increasing pressure from the Democratic-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee, the Justice Department last week asked McKay to expand his investigation to include Meese.

McKay has been investigating the lobbying activities of Lyn Nofziger on behalf of Wedtech shortly after he resigned as White House political director in 1982. Meese has admitted that in 1982, when he was White House counselor, he interceded on behalf of

Wedtech's successful effort to obtain a \$32 million Army contract. Wedtech hired E. Robert Wallach, Meese's personal attorney and friend, as a consultant and lawyer in 1983.

Wallach introduced Meese to W. Franklyn Chinn, a San Francisco investment adviser who set up a blind trust for Meese after he became attorney general in 1985. Chinn was then a Wedtech consultant, a fact Meese has acknowledged he knew, and later a director of the Bronx-based firm.

Meese's first choice for FBI director reportedly was former Deputy Atty. Gen. D. Lowell Jensen, who declined to be considered for the post.

Jensen, a Democrat who worked with Meese in California as an Alameda County prosecutor, returned to California last year to become a U.S. District Court judge in San Francisco.

Former Pennsylvania Gov. Richard Thornburgh turned down the FBI job May 1 after he was approached by Meese at Reagan's request.

CIA Director



William H. Webster

- Age: 62
- Birthplace: St. Louis, Missouri
- Formerly: FBI director, appointed by President Carter, 1978-87
- Background: U.S. attorney, Eastern District, Missouri, 1960-61; judge, U.S. District Court, Eastern Missouri, 1971-73; U.S. Court of Appeals, 8th Circuit, 1973-78; member, President's Advisory Commission on Criminal Rules, 1971-78
- Education: A.B., Amherst College, 1947; J.D., Washington University, 1949

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Sources: Chicago Tribune news reports, Who's Who in America